

Task Force Presentation to the
Kindergarten to College Work Group
P-20 Writing Proficiency Implementation Task Force
December 14, 2006

- 1) What is the purpose of the task force? List the names of the task force's members.

The Writing Proficiency Implementation Committee was authorized in November 2005, when the Montana Board of Regents approved Policy 301.16 and its writing proficiency expectations for the Montana University System. The Committee was created to advise the Montana University System on the implementation of the new policy. The Committee is the latest in a long line of groups that have assisted with the issue, beginning with the Composition Transition Team (1997-98), the Joint Committee on K-16 Composition Standards (1999-2000), the Writing Proficiency Steering Committee (2000-present), the Provisional Admissions Workgroup (2006), and other ad-hoc groups.

Members of this task force include Beverly Ann Chin, Professor, English Department, University of Montana-Missoula (UM); Cathy Corr, Instructor, Department of Arts and Sciences, UM College of Technology; Art Bangert, Professor, Education Department, Montana State University-Bozeman; Roger Barber, Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, Montana University System; Judy Snow, Assessment Director, Office of Public Instruction; Corri Smith, K-6 Teacher, Great Falls Public Schools; Jan Thomson, Executive Director, Montana Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; and Renee Rasmussen, Superintendent, Wibaux Public Schools.

- 2) Define the problem that your task force seeks to address.

The Implementation Committee was not formed to work on a problem, unlike some of the other P-20 task forces. Instead, the Committee was organized to bring a "fresh set of eyes" (as one member of the Committee suggested) to the Writing Proficiency project, and to use that new perspective in an advisory capacity. The Writing Proficiency project has historically been a collaborative, volunteer effort of K-12 and University System writing instructors, who have served on the above-described groups, become trained as scorers for the project, and evaluated hundreds of student writing submissions every spring for the last several years.

- 3) What are the recommended solutions for solving the problem?

As noted earlier, the Committee was not organized to solve a problem. The Implementation Task Force met for an orientation in September 2006, along with the Writing Proficiency Steering Committee. From a list of six goals, the task force decided to first review current procedures for administration, training, scoring, data collection, and reporting. Members have received a three-page document outlining those procedures, a folder of other relevant information, and access to the Writing Proficiency Website. They also proposed a work session to identify critical stakeholders in order to

address any communications problems regarding the Montana Board of Regents' Writing Proficiency policy.

- 4) What action does your taskforce recommend for the Board of Education? Explain why.

At this point, the Implementation Committee is not recommending any action for the Board of Education. In fact, there seems to be general agreement among the education partners involved in this project that the Montana University System should continue to administer its relatively new policy on writing proficiency with the advice of the Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee's charge lists the following responsibilities, and the bullets set out activities that have been initiated to date:

- Identify critical stakeholders and constituencies, and assist with the communication activities that involve those stakeholders.
- Review the writing proficiency requirement, in the context of admission and retention practices at each of the campuses of the Montana University System, and advise the System on consistent and effective practices.
 - OCHE is beginning this research, but it is resource-intensive.
- Provide advice and support for the administration, training, scoring, data collection and reporting procedures of the Montana Writing Proficiency Assessment.
 - The Task Force is now reviewing these procedures.
- Make recommendations to improve writing instruction and assessment practices in the State based on test data from ACT, SAT, advanced placement and the Montana Writing Proficiency Assessment.
 - This work requires careful review of data, extensive research, and significant expertise. OCHE and some graduate students have published findings and research is being conducted currently.
- Assist with the ongoing professional dialogue between teachers of writing across the P-20 spectrum, and recommend practices to improve that dialogue.
 - The Task Force has identified this as their second priority.
- Help identify and procure the necessary resources to support student preparation in writing, communications, assessments, professional development and data analysis related to the writing proficiency initiative.